

# Australia: Sustaining Human Societies and the Environment

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**STEP**  
SECOND-YEAR TRANSFORMATIONAL  
EXPERIENCE PROGRAM

## Learning Experience

During my time abroad, one of the learning experiences that stuck out to me the most was visiting and speaking to people from the Nywaigi Aboriginal tribe. We got a rare opportunity to hear some of the stories of their ancestors and were able to see how they restored the wetlands surrounding them. This experience enabled me to learn about a culture different from my own and helped me gain a cross-cultural perspective. The Nywaigi people are very in-tune with their environmental surroundings and showed us how they use the land for resources, but also have an enormous amount of respect for its preservation. This showed me a holistic point of view on how different cultures in Australia interact with their environments.



## Personal Impact

This trip really opened my eyes to the anthropogenic impacts we are causing on the environment. The implications of issues such as agricultural runoff and climate change are things that we as humans cause. After doing a beach cleanup, seeing bleached coral, I knew that our behavior as humans cannot continue on as is. Personally, this trip encouraged me to do more to protect and preserve our oceans and our land. It is important to act now so that future generations do not have to deal with the negative ramifications our actions are currently causing.

## Transformational Experience

During the summer of 2017, I was able to study abroad in North Queensland, Australia. The program was offered through Ohio State's Office of International Affairs. The program was three and a half weeks long and was composed of two environmental science courses taught through The Ohio State University. During the program, I learned about sustainability regarding human societies and the environment. While in Australia, our class traveled to Hidden Valley, Magnetic Island, Mission Beach, Atherton, Tyrconnell, Port Douglas, and Cairns. While in Hidden Valley, we stayed in cabins that were totally self-sufficient. We were able to see first hand how they used solar panels to generate power. We were also exposed to a variety of different landscapes which included camping in the Outback, snorkeling in the Great Barrier Reef, and hiking through the rainforest in the wet tropics. When we were on Magnetic Island we were able to observe koalas in their natural habitat; the eucalypt tree. Interacting with wildlife was a big part of the trip and gave me the opportunity to hold a koala, python snake, and a baby wallaby! There was a homestay in Atherton where I stayed at a free-range cattle and pig farm. Interacting with the farm owners was an amazing experience. We really got to know the family and what their day to day lives consist of. To conclude the trip, we went to Cairns and said our farewells to the beautiful Australia.



## Impact on Academic, Personal, and Life Goals

Academically, I received 6 credit hours worth of courses that all count toward my minor requirements. After graduation, I hope to write environmental policy to help curb climate change. The information I attained during this trip has brought me one step closer to achieving that goal.

## Favorite Experience

The best experience that I had while abroad was completing underwater transects during a field study at the Great Barrier Reef. We were paired off in teams of two and were each able to track fish within a certain zone. The type of fish my partner and I tracked is known as the sweetlip. This data was collected to determine if the zones within the reef were being properly protected from damaging externalities. There was also time given at each coral reef location to explore the reef. I was able to see sea creatures including white tip sharks, sea turtles, and a giant Maori wrasse. We were on the reef for three days and were led by the Great Barrier Reef Legacy, a Non-Profit organization in Port Douglas, Australia. The time we spent getting to know the crew was amazing. It was great to share our passion for protecting the reef. Getting the opportunity to see the Great Barrier Reef in person was truly transformational. Personally, seeing the reef was on my bucket list and getting to see some of the most preserved parts was amazing. It was also shocking to see the direct impacts that climate change has had on the reef.

